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ABSTRACT

Today's public schools are failing to educate not only disadvantaged students, but average students as well. The public education system in America faces twin dilemmas: In the current changing national economy and labor market, schools are inadequately preparing students to be self-sufficient adults; and the population of disadvantaged youth is steadily increasing. Suggested reforms by the federal government, magnet schools, and private foundations will do little to alter the structure of the educational system; school-site management, however, has the potential to produce changes. Through school-site management, administrators, teachers, and citizens can make the decisions (and monitor and evaluate their implementation) necessary to reform the education of disadvantaged youth. Unlike reforms foisted on schools by legislatures or boards, improvements resulting from school-site management would be implemented by the people initiating the reforms. This may be an advantage because reforms potentially would be more realistic, but reform efforts could also founder on the enormity of the task. Foundations can play a valuable role in the implementation of school-site management programs in public schools by supporting programs that are more likely to benefit the students, rather than objective reform that can be more beneficial to decisionmakers. (12 references) (KM)

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Private Foundations:

What Is Their Role in Improving the Education

of Disadvantaged Youth

by

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Several weeks ago, I was talking with a businessman who is the chairman of a statewide Governor's Policy Council on At Risk Youth. He was expressing his frustration with trying to get members of the Council, all of whom chair the boards of major state agencies, to recognize that schools must change if they are going to more effectively serve at risk young people. The members of the Council wanted to urge local school systems to adopt a well-known program that is in use in many urban areas throughout the nation. The Council chairman, however, was skeptical about this proposal, because in his view the program served only a few at risk youth. It did not seem to have the potential to change schools. He was trying to get his colleagues on the Council to understand the need for recommendations that would cause schools to alter fundamentally the ways they serve disadvantaged students. "What is that expression?," he asked. "'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'? Well, it is broke, and we've got to fix it!"

This is more than just the exasperation of one frustrated businessman. From every quarter of our society we are hearing that the public schools are failing to educate effectively not only disadvantaged students, but average students as well. The April 16 edition of The New York Times represents the pervasive nature of this indictment. In Section 9 of the paper, there was an article entitled,

"Experts Divided on Jobs in the 90's." Consisting of a dialogue among a half-dozen authors, researchers, and policy analysts, the article covered a range of subjects. Predictably, one of the experts stated, "The number of people who have high school

diplomas and college degrees who cannot communicate is amazing. They can't write, spell, or speak clearly; and we're not talking about dropouts."

Another panelists shared the observation, "I am seeing business suddenly worried about illiteracy, or minimal literacy skills and minimal logical abilities in the incoming work force. They never worried about it before." Still another expert said, "I find, with more and more government and business people I talk to in many different countries, that the business of societies is learning. The global positioning of countries more and more is going to be the extent to which they have a problem-solving population."

The same issue of the Times, in Section 4, included the weekly column of Albert Shanker, the President of the American Federation of Teachers. Shanker devoted his column to sharing findings from a February, 1989 report of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). The NAEP report, Crossroads in American Education, presented an overview of the organization's 20 years of student assessment in reading, writing, and science. At the conclusion of his column, Shanker summarized the NAEP report with the statement, "About half of our in-school 17-year-olds could not do math much beyond adding, subtracting and multiplying with whole numbers, and few could provide enough information in their writing exercises to communicate their ideas. In other words, most of them don't qualify for good jobs."

And finally, in the first section of the April 16th Times, there was an article that described the context in which many urban school children receive an inadequate

education. The article, "Tug-of-War for Black Youth's Hearts," described a mentoring program in Washington, D.C., and its efforts to exert a positive influence on black children who live in dangerous neighborhoods. One of the children in the mentoring program is a nine-year-old. He lives in a housing project with his four siblings and his 25-year-old mother who dropped out of school after the ninth grade. "Drugs and violence is all over here," said the mother. "It's in the houses, on the streets. I worry about my kids all the time." Her goal for her son is to "finish high school and maybe go to college."

These reports from one day's New York Times illustrate the twin dilemmas of public education in America. First, because of the changing nature of our national economy and the labor needs of business and industry, our schools are not doing a good job of preparing most young people to become productive and self-sufficient. Second, there are large numbers of disadvantaged youth for whom even this inadequate education remains an elusive goal.

The response to these problems has come primarily from state legislatures. States are, after all, primarily responsible for public education in this nation, and it is appropriate that much of the leadership for education reform should come from this quarter. Ironically, states which have had the longest and most devastating experience with the neglect of public education--Arkansas, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Florida--

have also been leaders in the education reform movement.[1] Perhaps more than other states, they understand the consequences of failing to invest in the future. Regardless of their motivation, states are now appropriating more money for public schools, and engaging in a wide variety of reforms, ranging from encouraging more students to participate in advanced placement programs, to requiring more math and science units for graduation, to experimenting with school-based decisionmaking.

A handful of school systems also seem to be moving beyond incremental improvements to initiating a major overhaul of the schools. Pittsburgh, Miami, San Diego, Memphis and Cincinnati are among the school systems that policy analysts cite as leaders in the process of local education reform.[2]

In spite of the energetic efforts of some states and local school systems, education reform is proceeding at a painfully slow pace. In most schools, little has changed. Teachers still talk to students rather than working with them, expectations continue to be low for disadvantaged students, and schools seldom challenge, provoke, engage, or stimulate young people. Schools still pay too much attention to the students who learn independently, and they pay too little attention to those who suffer from academic and personal neglect. Worst of all, most schools do not balance the mastery

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[1]School Reform in 10 States (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1988).

[2]Paul T. Hill, Arthur E. Wise, Leslie Shapiro, Educational Progress: Cities Mobilize to Improve Their Schools (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, January, 1989), p. 4.

of basic skills with the process of learning how to learn, and the attainment of understanding. According to Rexford Brown, Director of the Higher Literacies Project at the Education Commission of the States, "Schooling places heavy emphasis on drill, memorization, recitation, seatwork, and teacher talk...almost no intensive reading takes place, no extensive writing, and no classroom discussion or debate."[3]

The important task for those seeking to reform public education is not to define the schools' problems or to pose myriad and often conflicting remedies. Rather, the challenge is to bring about changes in behaviors and practices to enable students to become more knowledgeable and creative.

State legislatures have tried to change practices at the building level. They have created accountability and testing programs which encourage teachers to focus their instruction so it will produce measurable results. Because of state mandates, teachers may, for example, emphasize math skills, and within the context of a statewide testing program, more students' may be able to demonstrate their mastery of these skills. While policy makers may have caused students to improve their performance on standardized tests, they cannot assume that students have a better understanding of mathematics, nor that they will be able to apply the skills they have allegedly learned. Legislatures, therefore, may have succeeded in changing teachers' behaviors, but it does not

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[3]Rexford Brown, "Schooling and Thoughtfulness," Basic Education: Issues, Answers, & Facts, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Council for Basic Education, Spring, 1988), p. 5.

necessarily follow that they have achieved education reform that will better prepare students for life in the next century.

Another potential advocate for building level change, the federal government, has almost withdrawn from the field of education reform. The United States Congress has continued to support and improve compensatory education, vocational education, and programs for students with handicapping conditions, but the executive branch has restricted its role to fact finding, rhetoric from the bully pulpit, and recognition programs. Except for the catalytic effect of the Department of Education's release of A Nation At Risk, the executive branch has yet to show that it has an effective strategy for achieving education reform at the local level.

It is also unlikely that the recent education proposals of the Bush Administration will cause administrators and teachers to change their current practices. The proposed "Presidential Merit Schools" program would provide cash rewards to schools that make substantial progress in raising students' educational performance. If enacted, this program will tell us what we already know, that it is possible to improve schools dramatically. "Improving" schools will be rewarded, but few if any schools will undertake major reforms to qualify for the rewards. The program will neither encourage nor require plans to raise academic achievement.[4]

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[4]"Bush Proposes FY 1990 $422 Million Initiative, Adds $31 Million to Voc Ed," Employment and Training Reporter, Vol 20, No. 30 (Washington, D.C.: Manpower Information, Inc., April 12, 1989), p. 883.

The proposed "Magnet Schools of Excellence" program would support the establishment, expansion, or enhancement of magnet schools. According to a U.S. Department of Education official, these magnet schools would "offer high-quality instruction...through curricula and activities of an exceptional or innovative nature." While any effort to encourage high quality education is helpful, experience has demonstrated that magnet schools do not usually produce improved education for the economically and educationally disadvantaged children who remain in regular schools.

Like state legislatures and the federal government, some private foundations also try to encourage education reform. However, foundations have no power or control over local schools, and their resources are minute when compared to the amounts of local, state, or federal appropriations for public elementary and secondary education.

It is impossible to generalize about foundations, because the only things they have in common is that they must adhere to federal law, they have boards of trustees, and they give away money. In all other ways they differ from one another, in the size of their assets, how much money they distribute, how they consider proposals and make grants, and what they expect to achieve from their grantmaking.

Even though there are 27,000 active grantmaking foundations in the United States, with total assets of $115 billion, these numbers are deceptive. Of the 27,000 foundations, only 6,410 account for 96 percent of the assets and 87 percent of the grant dollars. A further examination of these 6,410 foundations reveals that only 150 of

them account for 55 percent of all foundation assets, and they award 38 percent of all foundation grant dollars. While in 1987 educational institutions received 37 percent of all foundation dollars, most of these funds went to colleges and universities. Elementary and secondary schools received a total of only $61 million, and this includes non-public schools.[5]

For most people, the word "foundation" evokes images of money sought and given with little effort. Most people who have worked to either obtain grants or make them would disagree with this perception. Before an organization receives a grant it has usually invested a great deal of time, money, and labor in searching for a foundation that may be responsive to the organization's mission and need. After a grantseeker has identified such a foundation, the organization's staff has to work to make themselves known to the foundation. Over a period of many months, they must develop a relationship with foundation staff, and establish credibility. In the end, foundations turn down many more grant proposals than they fund.

Even the process of grantmaking is not as easy as it may appear. Federal law requires each foundation to pay out annually in grants and contributions amounts equal to 4.25 percent of the foundation's net assets. This means, for example, that each year a foundation with one million dollars in assets must make grants or contributions

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[5]Loren Renz, Foundations Today: Current Facts and Figures on Private and Community Foundations, Sixth Edition (New York: The Foundation Center, 1989), pp. 3, 29.

totalling at least $42,500. Foundations with $100 million dollars in assets must annually pay out at least $4.25 million each year. Some foundations pay out the minimum required, and others go beyond the minimum.

Foundations respond differently to the federal requirement to disburse a certain percentage of their assets each year. A small foundation without staff, or with part-time staff, may make grants based on a limited awareness of needs, because the foundation only has the capacity to respond to needs identified by trustees, or by determined grantseekers. If a philanthropist narrowly defines a foundation's purpose, such as providing scholarships for impoverished students from eastern Kentucky to attend the University of Cincinnati, the foundation may not find it necessary to have a grantmaking strategy because the purpose of the foundation is very specific. On the other hand, a foundation with a broad mission, relatively large assets, active trustees, and adequate staff has more opportunities to take initiative in defining needs and considering how to best respond to them. Creative grantmaking, however, is more a function of the trustees' and staff's level of energy and insight than it is the size of the foundation's assets.

The $61 million foundations contributed to elementary and secondary schools in 1987 is less than the annual budget of one public school system with an enrollment of 20,000 students. Considering that this $61 million includes grants to independent schools, the amount made available to public education is even smaller. Foundations

are not only reluctant to support publicly financed institutions, but they question whether public schools are making the best use of the resources currently available to them. And in light of the large budgets of most public school systems, foundations wonder whether their relatively modest support can make a real difference. Will the activity which the foundation is supporting produce significant change in the school system, or be overwhelmed by the system's bureaucratic, political, and financial infrastructure? These are legitimate concerns, validated by lessons of foundations' hard-won experience in supporting reform of urban school reform.

There is, perhaps, one change strategy that presents an opportunity for foundations seeking a way to encourage and support education reform that will enable schools to more effectively serve disadvantaged youth. The current emphasis on what education reformers call "school-based governance," "school site management," or "school-based decisionmaking" may provide an opening. Whatever term we use to describe it, school-based governance means that administrators, teachers, and citizens at the building level assume greater responsibility for improving their school.

There is potential for school-based decisionmaking to produce the changes schools need to make to help disadvantaged youth achieve at significantly higher levels. We know that schools serving large numbers of disadvantaged youth are not as effective as they should be. Dramatic change is required. We also know there are limits to the effectiveness of changes mandated by the federal government, by state

legislatures, or even by local school boards. In the end, the education of disadvantaged students depends on administrators and teachers at the building level. If they cannot fashion, or as Phil Schlechty say, "invent" a school to raise these students' achievement levels, it is not likely to get done.

Administrators and teachers do not have all the answers, but they do not need them. They can draw upon abundant informational resources, based on experience and research, which describe how to better educate disadvantaged youth. We already know that disadvantaged young people can perform at high levels, and that the actions of administrators and teachers can help them do so. The first step is for a leader or a leadership group at the school level to

believe that disadvantaged youth can master high content. The second step is to decide that the school must undergo major changes to enable disadvantaged young people to achieve at the high levels of which they are capable. Through school-based decisionmaking, administrators, teachers, and citizens can make the decisions, and monitor and evaluate their implementation, necessary to reform the education of disadvantaged youth.

The task of education reform is demanding. The federal government, state legislatures, and local superintendents have not found it easy to make education reform take hold, and it will not be easier just because it is the responsibility of people at the school site. In some ways, education reform will be more difficult under school-based

decisionmaking. Unlike reforms foisted onto the schools by legislatures or school boards, improvements resulting from school-based decisionmaking will have to be carried out by the people initiating the reforms. This may be an advantage in the sense that the reforms may be more realistic. It can be a disadvantage because the decisionmaking team may compromise their own "reforms." The teams may make assumptions about what is and is not "possible" based on their sensitivity to the culture and the relationships in the school. A state legislature cannot know that the opposition of one sixth grade teacher in one school can sabotage the implementation of education reform, legislation, but that school's decisionmaking team will know. The success of education reform at the building level may depend on whether the team will use its knowledge to win over or circumvent that teacher, or whether the team concludes that reform is secondary to maintaining good personal relationships.

Education reform through school-based decisionmaking may also founder on the enormity of the task. Michael Cohen points out that "the primary issues to be resolved at the school site level have to do with identifying structural and organizational features of schools that need to be altered to...[help] all students acquire higher order skills,...enhance [their] sense of self-worth and competence,...[and] provide an environment in which students receive personal attention." Cohen goes on to say, "a starting point" for change "are those conditions of instruction known to be related to student learning. These include educational goals, the structure of knowledge,

instructional tasks and activities, instructional group size and composition, and instructional time."[6]

It is hard to imagine administrators, teachers, and citizens at the building level taking on these issues. School boards and superintendents in most urban areas do not expect this type of school-based decisionmaking, they do provide the opportunity for it to occur, and they do not support it. Even where system-level school officials embrace school-based decisionmaking, they frequently emphasize a governance process which in reality means more autonomy for the principal but limited participation for teachers and citizens. In other places, school-based decisionmaking is characterized by increased teacher involvement, but not necessarily for the purpose of altering "the conditions of education known to be related to student learning." There is also evidence that state and local public officials are much more inclined to advocate school-based decisionmaking than they are to yield the power necessary for it to work.[7]

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[6]Michael Cohen, Restructuring The Education System: Agenda For The 1990s (Washington, D.C.: National Governor's Association, 1988), pp. 8-9.

[7]"In an effort to institute school-based improvements, New York State and the [New York City] central Board of Education created the Comprehensive School Improvement Project (CSIP) in 1985. Committees, composed of parents, teachers, and administrators, were formed at 'low achieving' schools for the purpose of developing strategies to improve each particular school. Independent evaluations, however, have revealed that the project is little more than a paper exercise at many schools. Schools are evaluated on the results of standardized test scores. There is little scrutiny of whether schools ever implement CSIP plans as long as these scores, which are easy to manipulate, go up. Even where CSIP is taken seriously, schools have neither the power nor resources to make real changes." "A Blueprint for School-Based Decision-Making and Systemwide Accountability," The Manhattan Forum, Vol. 2, No. 2 (New York: Office of David N.

In spite of these drawbacks, it is likely that only school-based decisionmaking teams, composed of administrators, teachers, and citizens can plan and implement lasting education reform. This process will not occur by itself. Advocates for education reform must encourage and support it.

As a result of a recent grants competition, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has witnessed the potential of school-based decisionmaking. The competition involved school systems interested in providing a more substantive and challenging education to disadvantaged youth in the middle grades. To begin the competitive process, the Foundation invited 20 urban school systems to send teams to a conference organized by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE).[8] Each team was composed of no more than 10 people, including at least two principals, two teachers

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Dinkins, Manhattan Borough President, March/April, 1989), p. 1.

On the other hand, Chicago is a notable example of where Illinois legislators have placed power in the hands of administrators, teachers, and citizens at the school site level. Under the Chicago School Reform Act, each Chicago school will be governed by a Local School Council consisting of the principal, six parents elected by parents, two community residents elected by community residents, and two teachers elected by the school's staff. One of the powers of the council is to "directly appoint, upon seven affirmative votes, a new principal to serve under a three-year performance contract." The legislation take effect beginning with the 1989-1990 school year. "Highlights of the Chicago School Reform Act," (Chicago: Designs for Change, 1988), p. 1.

[8]"NFIE Announces: Preparing Disadvantaged Young Adolescents for the Twenty-First Century: High Expectations, High Content, High Support," (Washington, D.C.:National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, June, 1988), pp. 1-4.

from each of the schools represented by the principals, a representative of the superintendent, and a community leader.

The conference was led by three outside consultants with expertise in adolescent development and education, Each of them made presentations of approximately an hour-and-a-half. Afterwards, the team spent two-and-a-half days reflecting on and assessing the implications of the information provided by the consultants, and planning for widespread change in their schools.

At the conclusion of the conference, the benefits of this process became apparent. Teachers reported that they are rarely involved in seminal discussions about school change, or have an opportunity to re-examine their assumptions about the possibility of school reform. They said they almost never get to work as peers with school district officials or even their principals on issues of systemic school improvement. Because the conference provided each team the time to develop as a group, the teams left with a spirit of camaraderie, and enthusiastic about the potential to better educate disadvantaged youth.

As the next step in the grants competition, the Foundation invited 12 of the school systems to develop proposals for possible major funding. School systems were asked to design their proposals around four objectives disadvantaged students should be able

to achieve by the time they enter the tenth grade.[9] It was the responsibility of the school systems to set forth in their proposals how they would achieve these objectives. Each school system was provided with a $10,000 planning grant, access to technical assistance, and five months to develop a proposal.

In the request for proposal, the Foundation asked each school system to assemble a proposal development team. The RFP suggested, but did not require, that a majority of the team be composed of people who would be directly responsible for implementing the proposal. Most school systems form their teams by adding to the group that had attended the NFIE conference.[10]

The RFP asked each school system and at least two of its schools to describe how the school system and the schools would "develop and provide an education of high expectations, high content, and high support" for disadvantaged youth in the

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[9]The objectives were stated as follows: "Between the time disadvantaged youth leave grade five and enter grade ten, they will: (1) Remain in school and complete the middle grades curriculum, on time; (2) Exhibit mastery of higher order reasoning, thinking, and comprehension skills; (3) Exhibit improved self-esteem, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward school and schoolwork, as a result of regularly engaging in supportive interactions with adults; (4) Enter high school with an understanding of how different curriculums can affect their career and/or postsecondary education options, and they will select programs of study that will enable them to pursue their choices." "The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation Program for Disadvantaged Youth: Middle Grades Initiative," 31 October 1988, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, New York, N.Y.

[10]Hayes Mizell and Wanda Fleming, Memorandum on Overview and Guidelines for Submission of Proposals, 7 November 1988, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, New York, N.Y.

middle grades. Each of the schools was also required to have a proposal development team, with at least some of the members also serving on the school system team.

At the conclusion of the proposal development process, the team members were enthusiastic about their experience. Team members felt they had participated in a critical activity--developing a plan for transforming their schools. Teachers said they had been energized and renewed by having the responsibility to examine their schools from a problem-solving, rather than from a service-delivery, perspective. They felt their opinions were valued. In addition, they had the opportunity to learn new information, and to consider its relevance to their schools. One teacher said the proposal development process was the best experience of her professional life. Another teacher vowed "never to return to the mental lethargy the system encourages."

The teams were so enthusiastic about the plans they developed, they said they would use their proposals as blueprint for change, even if they did not receive funding. Some teams even acknowledged that while they hoped to receive a grant, they realized the schools' major problems required more changes in attitudes than money.

This experience suggests several potential roles for private, community, and corporate foundations. Through their grantmaking, foundations can communicate to public school systems in urban areas that they recognize the importance of school-based decisionmaking as a tool for education reform. School systems, like private organizations, are eager to receive not only the money, but the recognition that is

implicit in a foundation grant. Because the process of obtaining a grant is competitive, the public perceives the recipient of a foundation grant as a "winner" or as "worthy." This is how school systems would like to be seen by the public. A grant advances a school system's public relations interests as well as its financial and programmatic interests. For these reasons, school systems can be receptive to how foundations frame their guidelines for grantmaking. A school system may have an interest in school-based decisionmaking as a concept, but it may lack the incentive to initiate such a process. However, if a foundation announces that it is interested in supporting school-based decisionmaking, the school system may rise to the opportunity and pay more attention to this means of achieving education reform. Foundations can, therefore, play a valuable role in causing school systems to consider school-based decisionmaking as an important issue.

One of the problems with decisionmaking at the building level is that educators may see it as an objective of reform, rather than as an activity intended to bring about quality education. Just because administrators, teachers, and citizens make decisions at the school site, it does not necessarily mean that the students' education will improve. If schools focus on school-based decisionmaking as anything other than a means to achieve improved student performance, they will have misused this tool of education reform. Foundations can help assure that school-based decisionmaking is more likely to benefit students, rather than decisionmakers, by supporting programs that

use this process to achieve a specific instructional purpose. The decisionmaking task may be as fundamental as developing what Mike Cohen calls "a map, or a vision, of what [a] restructured [school] might look like." This is an obvious starting point for many school-based decisionmaking teams. It is not appropriate for a foundation to tell a school system what to do, but foundations can provide a challenge which school systems can choose to pursue, or not.

Aside from encouraging school-based decisionmaking itself, and providing some focus for this process, foundation dollars can provide support which is essential if school-based decisionmaking is to work. If a team of administrators, teachers, and citizens are going to provide leadership to restructure their school, they need the time to meet, to study, and to plan. But educators at the building level are very much involved in what Ted Sizer calls the "extraordinary dailiness of keeping a good school." They are not only engaged in the day-to-day task of delivering educational services, but they must respond to a wide range of demands on their time, from unanticipated crises to bureaucratic routines necessary to satisfy the central office and the state department of education. There is simply little time left for the study and reflection that any good decisionmaking process requires.

Educators at the building level are also very isolated. They usually have little voice in planning for staff development, and the in-service education provided by the central office seems to have little to do with either meeting the educators' needs, or preparing

them to implement education reforms. Teachers do not routinely read such major education periodicals as Education Week, Educational Leadership, or Phi Delta Kappan, and they seldom have the opportunity to attend well-planned, germane, and challenging education conferences. Teachers may know what is going on in their school, but too many of them do not know what is going on in a comparable school down the street, or across town. As a result, teachers experience limited professional and personal growth. One of the benefits of school-based decisionmaking is that it can empower educators to take more responsibility for their own continuing education. Reformers' concerns about developing "lifelong learners" are as applicable to building level educators as to students.

By supporting school-based decisionmaking, foundations can help these educators break out of the "mental lethargy" and isolation that make it so difficult for schools to reform themselves. A school system can use a foundation grant to hire substitute teachers and provide release time for regular classroom teachers to participate on a decisionmaking team. Foundation support can provide subscriptions to major education periodicals for all team members, and help send the entire team, including community representatives, to conferences and workshops that relate to the team's task. The team may also benefit from involving outside experts at the school site. As the team begins it work, an outside, independent facilitator may be useful to keep the team on task and to help ensure that no one person or group of persons dominate

the team's deliberations. The team may also wish to have direct access to consultants who can provide expertise on the issue which the team is addressing. With foundation support, decisionmaking teams can get the help needed to identify and review alternative practices, and to plan and implement changes necessary to better educate disadvantaged youth.

This is not to suggest that support for school-based decisionmaking is the only appropriate role for foundations to play in encouraging school reform. Grants to research, advocacy, and school support organizations are essential. However, the potential of school-based decisionmaking does suggest there may be greater payoffs from support for this activity than foundations have realized. Particularly for corporate and community foundations, and even for public education funds, it may be time to reassess the effect of initiatives that support teacher workshops, mini-grants for teachers, the purchase of computers and software, and tutoring and mentoring programs. These activities can have a positive impact, but they can have a greater impact when they are an integral part of a school's carefully developed design for major change.

Foundations, like the federal government and the states, can support but cannot achieve school reform. That is the task of administrators, teachers, and citizens at the building level. It is up to them to decide if their schools are willing to challenge, engage, and support disadvantaged students to enable them to achieve at high levels. School-

based decisionmaking can be a tool for helping a building level leadership team reach that decision, and for executing it. As policy analysts at the RAND Corporation have pointed out, education reform "means using policy less to mandate resource allocation, structures, and rule, and more to initiate development. It means commissioning people who work in real schools to fashion workable solutions to real problems, and allowing those solutions the opportunity to fail and the time to succeed."[11] For this to happen, school boards and superintendents must expect greater teacher-citizen-administrator leadership from the building level, they must permit it to occur, and they must provide opportunities for that leadership to be nurtured.[12]

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[11]Richard F. Elmore and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin, Steady Work: Policy, Practice, and the Reform of American Education (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, February, 1988), p. 61.

[12]For additional information, see: The Regional Lab Reports - On Shared Leadership (Andover, Massachusetts: The Regional Laboratory for Education Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, March 1989); The Best of ERIC on Educational Management - School-Based Management (Eugene, Oregon: Clearinghouse on Educational Mangement, College of Education, University of Oregon, January 1989); Barbara J. Hansen and Carl L. Marburger, School Based Improvement: A Manual for District Leaders (Columbia, Maryland: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1989); Carl L. Marburger, One School At A Time: School Based Management, A Process for Change (NCCE, 1988);